

# Bard

Bard College  
**Bard Digital Commons**

---

Robert Kelly Manuscripts

Robert Kelly Archive

---

2-2004

febE2004

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)

---

## Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "febE2004" (2004). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 837.  
[http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/837](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/837)

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@bard.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

# Bard

=====

Now so much of it is certain  
wind falls flowers  
bend of their own weight  
sometimes it is cold

write your way into it, child,  
the dream darling waits to tell more

the meaning each thing has  
the bee the little cupboard  
the sleeping bag the scorpion

talk yourself into knowing  
into going, be a waterfall  
for a minute, what have you got to lose

we have nothing nothing  
it happens to us only  
by the will of another

and who is that god, that other?  
The one you were a life ago

but isn't my life now  
going to be the god of next time round,  
karma, residue, shadow?

What life is that?  
there is nothing but now

but you said this life is from that other  
no, it was language said so, they are words,  
do you believe them?

anything that seems so  
it must be the talking  
tells you

walk your way into it  
the terrible incest of man with word

the rose bends of its own weight

you wind up believing  
your nieces romp over your lap  
it is the Bible again  
a camel is bleating by your windowsill.

20 February 2004

=====  
And each one waiting to explain  
that's what I love  
*kieselgrund* the abyss of pebbles  
from which the forced narcissus rose

rises by the astonished window  
over the baseboard heater  
the strange angry smell of them

in a glass marked with Venus's mirror  
your mother set four Dutch  
bulbs their base in water  
to do what such things do

what do I know of such ordinary  
miracles we blunder through  
day and night dense mosaic  
of them everywhere I look  
something busy changing

old lizard of the moon goes in and out  
and tonight they tell me the year  
changes too don't I feel it in my skin

how can I tell my changes  
from the world changing

is it all one question  
judging from the stars and

lady bugs colonizing  
schoolhouses, all one  
miraculous circus act by act  
and never see the whole of it

20 February 2004

=====

Measurable entities

people, small, living up in trees

names heard in dream

coming sometimes from the trees

sometimes from one's own mouth

a throat you feel only in sleep

small people speaking a quick

language like Persian not Persian

odes not odes, nothing named

just sounds making sense

but not to you, miracle of dream

that it stretches out your whole life

always new always its colors

untarnished o doctor of the soul

why does the dream never grow old?

21 February 2004

=====

Measure me by your standards  
am I three enough to be?  
For no decent man can live  
as one or two, this one or  
that once, there must always  
to be him be a sacred trinity of me

wander love or when the music broke  
still had to be the road beneath my feet  
as if I were all the going in the world  
and even I am Africa

22 February 2004

## FOUR FOR THE GOSPELMAKERS

The animal symbols of the four evangelists  
are the actual gospels. Man eats Ox.  
Lion eats Man. Eagle watches  
from the mouth that is the sky, a great  
pale word waiting. Waiting there for you.  
Or Ox eats grass, Lion eats Ox,  
what does Man eat? Man eats woman,  
the secret and universal Opposite.

Eagle equals Serpent in tradition.  
Snake bites Man. Woman crushes  
or at least controls the serpent  
with her heel, the rounded part  
of all her going that touches earth.  
Eurydice fails, Miriam succeeds.  
That is when The Paganism changes.  
Eagle is Serpent. Ox still eats grass,  
grass eats manure. Man is woman.  
The lion stands alone on the earth.  
The lion is the word the sky spoke.  
The lion has no opposite. The lion  
has eaten everyone and said everything.  
Now the lion sleeps in the sun.

22 February 2004



=====

Catherine means pure Mary maybe bitter  
who wouldn't be with a brother like that  
I like the pure because they feel so intensely  
the pure are at the cross-hairs of the world

and everything is on the march towards them.  
Catherine. Blake's mysterious naked wife  
who knew his colors better than he did.  
And his brother was gone on before,

his face left in the shine of morning sun on  
mahogany. From those we have lost  
messages endlessly arrive, the ones  
who stay with us are mostly mute.

The lost recover their purity in death or absence—  
that is when and how the silent brother speaks.

22 February 2004

=====

You don't have to know anything about me.  
It was enough, the blue sky and harsh wind,  
your voice on the telephone telling me,  
not telling me what I really want to hear.  
What do I want to hear you tell me, and why?

Isn't the enough of this the final word of that?  
Why am I always asking for what I do not want?  
Wanting what I will turn from soon, turn  
back to the silence from which wanting comes,  
where from time to time your voice also speaks

telling me what I shall have to make do with till  
the word I want to hear and will not come  
decides to come and I will not hear it  
as if to hear you say I love you too and then we sleep.

22 February 2004

## THE ACTUAL

What kind of flower would  
refuse to answer when  
the voice I'm trying to imitate  
actually speaks? Narcissus  
for me and laurel for you,  
is that the problem, that even  
now I don't know your favorite flower?

It's so hard to be a man  
and not know these final things,  
the taste, the source, the sweat,  
the texture of your anger maybe  
moving when the toast burns  
or the cat has misbehaved,  
it's not about power or conquest  
or desire or control, just  
the little recognitions that fill a day  
with what is actually you.

The actual, that is the problem,  
so all I don't know stops singing  
its musical comedy and opens  
wide on the human person there,  
you animal, you vocabulary, you god.

23 February 2004

=====

The trouble with words of course is that there's no way you can keep them from meaning things. Meaning stuff. Meaning everything you don't want them to mean. Meaning everything you don't want to know you mean.

No matter how you set them down, words creep towards one another, touch. Words are like lovers, no way to keep them from touching.

Words are contact. Context. Text is what is woven, word laid on word. That is why the Ancients spoke of text in the first place. And why the even more Ancient Ones called words the gift of Mercury, and called Mercury the lord of words. Elemental mercury has such an affinity for itself that two drops of mercury will, if brought close, turn into one drop.

Words touch each other and each pours its power onto the other and a new mass results.

Poetry loves to interfere in this process. Its failure to arrest mercurial union is poetry's great success. The words will always make meaning beyond the conscious wish.

23 February 2004

## **CARNIVAL EVERLASTING**

But we wait for them anyway,  
children of bland disorder  
waiting in their turn to be amused

terrible absence of anything happening  
be a world full of entertained  
docile in their momentary gondolas

while angry football fans from Udine  
batter at the railroad gates  
locked to keep them from the vaporetto

I live in the liberties of this invention  
city on a cold dark sea where love  
is the only date palm the exclusive oil

breathing down your décolletage  
to remind the ornamental flesh  
that men have needs

often nobler than they are.

This lust of mine for instance  
is the Holy Roman Emperor

and so I mark this movement  
adriatica con morte as if a ship  
sailed down your arm and left your hands

forever with just this wake behind it  
that on some mornings you can look at  
and read as an actual word and sometimes not.

23 February 2004

=====

Lukewarm cavalier  
spitting live horses out of his hands

from the south so many days  
marrying a woman from the Algarve

where Prince Hebrew the Interrogator  
finally cracked the cipher of the sea.

This knight hoped she'd remember  
what her sovereign guessed

and tell him now. Salt on horseback  
turns into waves. But they run away.

23 February 2004

=====

“The sand is black with us  
and the sky aches above it.  
But on cloudy days the ships  
still come and load our grieving  
women and take them off  
to lands where music happens.  
Here we are too close to Africa.  
Here all the music speaks of God,  
but we need the desperate operas of men.”

23 February 2004



=====

Herringbone philosophy.

Old runes

left from a nasty time

making simple

magic, hard answers.

RK for example,

road, keen,

a sharp passage,

a bitter highway.

Yet I long to travel it

all the way

to that island where

you are the last

letter of the alphabet.

23 February 2004

## **RECK OR REEK OR ROCK**

I bear it on my back.

You can see it but I can't.

This is the highway of the moon

I follow in the dark

going only by the one face

to guide me.

The pale one. The one

that so often turns away.

The only one I know,

you see me stumbling in the dark

you know I'm after something.

You see what I carry on my back.

23 February 2004

## **BIENVENUE**

Castaway enigma  
on my blue shore  
I will restore you  
to your proper body

after I lick each part  
clean and smooth again  
and press it together  
with every other and you

suddenly are here  
walking by my sea  
thank you for coming  
here is my lofty door.

24 February 2004

## THE ORDINARY THINGS

and the true, specify  
for each occasion  
a scriptural permission,

just find a text  
that tells me to touch you

six thousand years  
a clever idiot  
a squirrel-brained emperor  
has been trying to open  
this one golden chest

inside is a jewel  
or a machine,  
talisman maybe  
combination of a stone and a sigh  
that lets him or anybody  
do anything they choose

they don't even have to choose  
*for it takyth the mind*  
*thither, whereof it thinketh*  
to that place, how can you  
call it a place  
when it is moving too,  
breathes back in your face,  
nibbles the old king's neck?

24 February 2004